

THE
ACADEMY OF THE FINE ARTS
AND ITS FUTURE

ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE ART CLUB OF PHILADELPHIA

BY

EDWARD H. COATES

JANUARY 24TH, 1890

PHILADELPHIA

1890

“A writer may be many things besides a poet; he may be a warrior like Æschylus, a man of business like Shakespeare, a courtier like Chaucer, or a cosmopolitan philosopher like Goethe; but the moment the poetic mood is upon him all the trappings of the world with which for years he may have been clothing his soul—the world’s knowingness, its cynicism, its self-seeking, its ambition fall away, and the man becomes an inspired child again, with ears attuned to nothing but the whispers of those spirits from the golden age, who according to Hesiod, haunt and bless the degenerate earth.”

THEODORE WATTS

“The Academy of the Fine Arts and its Future”

“Art sanctifies the sorrow of the world.” These are the words of a poet,—of one whose dearest ambition it was, in the early years of his life, to become a painter. But for us—for those of us who have not the happiness to be either poets or painters, whose lines of life have been cast in a mechanical, a railway, an electrical age—a century which, in its special fields of invention, exploration and scientific conquest, claims to have given to the world more than all the ages preceeding it—what shall be said of art? Surely that it still represents for us much of the grace, the charm, the inspiration of life. Almost unconsciously it has become a part of every day. In its simplest forms, and even upon the most prosaic lives, its influence is a dominant one, with a constant appeal and an answer, ever ready, to that faculty of the soul which asks to behold the beautiful, and accords it, when seen, instant recognition.

But while we are told that art, speaking generally, is everything that is not nature, it may not be claimed that all art, or that art in its finer forms and highest expression, appeals to or is intelligible to every one. There are doubtless some who are slow to believe that Wagner’s is the music of the future, or who fail to see behind the misty lines of Corot the master poet-painter of landscape art. It is not true that the glories of the Uffizi,

the Louvre or the Vatican lie open to all who look upon them for the first time. One of the most distinguished critics of modern times says that Edgar Allen Poe, with all his genius and intellectual qualification, could not have been a *great* poet, because he had not sufficient knowledge.

Still the love of art, like the love of nature—and the one always brings the other or is born with it—grows upon us with ever increasing force; and the time comes when, endowed with new power of vision, the old ideals thrown aside, we wander with Diaz in the woods of Fontainebleau, or on the borders of the Seine with Daubigny; gaze upon the wastes of Old Ocean with Richards, or sail across the grand Canal at Venice with Turner, Rico or Moran, with real delight. Later we walk in quiet fields, or under blue skies, with Rousseau and Dupré, pause with Millet in listening expectation to hear from the distant spire the pathetic melody of the Angelus, or wait with Corot, behind a clump of silver hazel bushes, to catch the tones from the ringing lyre of Orpheus, as he salutes the triumphant morn. Later still, but perhaps it is not always later, the hard and lifeless block of the sculptor speaks to us in language at once distinct and intelligible. We feel the charm and power, which, without color, depend upon form and light for their expression;—"the cold marble leaps to life—a God." And when at last we know, and have made our own those deathless creations of Pheidias—the Victory, the Fates and the Theseus of the pediment, we break away from the inward passion which has held us mute, and are ready to declare with Emerson that

"Earth proudly wears the Parthenon
As the best gem upon her zone."

By the courtesy of the Art Club this opportunity is offered of saying a few words in behalf of the Academy of the Fine Arts; what it is doing, what it asks of the community, and what it hopes to accomplish in the future.

Matthew Arnold says that "Culture is the acquaintance with the best that has been said and known in the world." To further such acquaintance, and in the words of the Charter, "to promote the cultivation "of the Fine Arts, by introducing correct and elegant "copies from the works of the first masters in sculpture and painting," was the purpose of those who, in 1805, founded the Pennsylvania Academy, the oldest art institution in the United States. It gives us a thrill of patriotic pride, as for a moment we feel ourselves present in that Hall, already filled with sacred associations, where twenty-nine years before, the forefathers signed the Declaration of Independence, and where now seventy-one of our citizens, of whom forty-one are lawyers, are met to subscribe to the articles of association for this our first art academy. The list of signers is a distinguished one. It includes George Clymer, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, Joseph Hopkinson, author of "Hail Columbia," William Tilghman, president of the Common Pleas, and afterward Chief Justice, William Rush, Charles Willson Peale and Rembrandt Peale, artists, William Meredith, Joseph B. McKean, William Rawle, Horace Binney, Simon Gratz, A. J. Dallas, Richard Rush, William Lewis, Charles Biddle, Jacob S. Waln, John Redman Coxe and Edward Pennington.

From such names the first board of twelve directors, including two artists and seven lawyers, was

selected. George Clymer was chosen to be the first President. His portrait, by Charles Willson Peale, now hangs in the Directors' Room of the Academy. His successors in office have been :

JOSEPH HOPKINSON,
JOSEPH DUGAN,
EDWARD L. CAREY, .
JOSEPH R. INGERSOLL,
HENRY D. GILPIN,
CALEB COPE,
JAMES L. CLAGHORN,
GEORGE S. PEPPER.

The first honorary members of the Academy were Benjamin West, then in London and President of the Royal Academy, Robert Fulton and Bushrod Washington; and among the Directors who have served the Institution since 1806 we find the names of

SAMUEL F. BRADFORD,
REEVES LEWIS,
THOMAS CADWALADER,
THOMAS SULLY,
JOSEPH ALLEN SMITH,
WILLIAM STRICKLAND,
JOHN C. MONTGOMERY,
FRANKLIN PEALE,
CHARLES GRAFF,
JOHN NEAGLE,
HENRY INMAN,
THOMAS BIDDLE,
WILLIAM S. BIDDLE,
JOHN REYNELL COATES,
HYMAN GRATZ,

JOHN J. VANDERKEMP,
DR. CHARLES MEIGS,
CHARLES MACALESTER,
JOHN T. LEWIS,
JAMES R. LAMBDIN,
PETER F. ROTHERMEL,
REV. HENRY J. MORTON,
J. FRANCIS FISHER,
SAMUEL WELSH,
J. PEMBERTON HUCHINSON,
MATTHIAS W. BALDWIN,
DR. JAMES M. SOMMERVILLE,
JOHN SARTAIN,
DR. FRANCIS W. LEWIS,
WILLIAM STRUTHERS,
CHARLES TOPPAN,
JOSEPH HARRISON,
JOHN HENRY TOWNE,
GEORGE WHITNEY,
JOHN BOHLEN,
FAIRMAN ROGERS,
MATTHEW BAIRD,
HENRY CHARLES LEA,
JOSEPH E. TEMPLE.

The first building was erected in 1806 upon the lot on Chestnut Street above 10th, purchased from John Miller, together with ½5 feet frontage in addition purchased from Thomas Leiper. The design is supposed to have been that of Robert Mills, or of Latrobe, the architect of the old Pennsylvania Bank. The thought of that day was certainly not prepared for the overwhelming statement of Sir Henry Maine that "Except

the blind forces of nature nothing moves in this world which is not Greek in its origin," but Greece was in the architectural mind, and the buildings of the Girard Bank, the Custom House, formerly the Bank of the United States, the Exchange, and the United States Mint were the outcome. Later this idea culminated for the time in the building for Girard College, but to-day, after an interval of nearly fifty years, that splendid edifice stands, with the capitol at Washington, the finest flower of pure architecture on this continent.

The Academy building of 1806 was destroyed by fire in 1845, and was reconstructed by Richard A. Gilpin in 1846. As so restored we remember it as of yesterday, the severe and classic marble building, with its twin Ionic pillars, and its flight of white steps approached from Chestnut Street through the long Court paved with flags. The busts of Franklin by Ceracchi and of Napoleon after Canova are on either side as we near the entrance, and in the corner of the court yard, neglected and obscure, with the boughs of the great white hawthorn tree above it, is the antique and headless Ceres, with its dignified pose and exquisite lines of drapery, which now appeals to all lovers of the beautiful from the front of the Broad Street building.

In 1870 the building on Chestnut Street, in order to prepare for increased accommodation, was sold to the American Theatre, and the Chestnut Street Opera House now stands upon the site. The present Academy building, designed by Furness and Hewitt, and dedicated to noble uses in the first year of the Nation's second century, is one of the most commodious, as well as the best adapted for its purposes of art education and art exhibition, which has been constructed in the United States.

It stands as a monument to the liberality of Philadelphia's citizens, and to the energy and persistent work of Mr. James L. Claghorn, president, over \$400,000 having been subscribed toward its erection and completion.

At times complaint has been made as to the situation of the building, walled off as it now seems to be from the Chestnut Street promenade by the marble quadrangle of the City Hall. But the obvious reply to this lies in the fact that the present site has those advantages of sky and northern light which are absolutely necessary for the galleries and schools, and which in the present era of lofty buildings it is most difficult to secure; and surely if our neighbors in New York are amply content to journey to Central Park and 68th Street to visit the Metropolitan Museum, and we ourselves are not unwilling to "run over" the distance of a mere hundred miles to see the Wolf pictures, or to catch glimpses of the last Rembrandts deposited in the museum for exhibition, we need not dread the few blocks intervening between Walnut Street and the Academy. Of course there was a time when our great-grandmothers lost their way in the brambles and blackberry bushes which covered the fields at Third and Arch Streets; but Philadelphia may no longer be confined to a score of streets, and the time is passed when it was necessary to have one's office upon the ground floor to accomplish any business transaction.

The work of the Academy is three-fold. *1st.*—The formation of a permanent collection of paintings and sculpture, representing what is best in art. *2d.*—The exhibition of contemporary work. *3d.*—The schools.

To speak of these in inverse order, it is remarkable that while the institution was organized and incorporated

as an *academy* there was not until 1868 any system of instruction or study. Prior to that time permits were issued to students to make copies of paintings, and drawings from casts and life, under supervision of a Committee of Instruction. For the schools as they exist at present credit is chiefly due to John Sartain, Christian Schüssele, Fairman Rogers, Thomas Eakins, Dr. W. W. Keen and Thomas Anshutz, and Philadelphia has reason to be proud of their honorable record and of the work thus far accomplished. The Academy has the honor of having been the first art institution to open its doors to women, with the same privileges and upon the same terms and conditions as to men. Gérôme was of opinion that the experiment might be desirable, but could hardly be successful. There is, however, no question as to the most satisfactory results.

The purpose of the Academy has been and is to offer opportunities for higher education, and facilities for study subject to criticism by the instructors; it is not to teach details but the fundamentals of art, and the instruction is primarily and chiefly for those who intend to make art a profession.

When Michael Angelo saw Titian's painting of Danæ, he is said to have remarked "pity that in Venice they do not learn how to draw well," and to have added that if "art had done" for that great master of luminosity and color "all that nature had, everything would have been possible for him." Now the Academy laying stress upon primary and fundamental things, seeks to give a thorough understanding of drawing, of movement or action, and of form; and believes that as these are grasped or mastered whatever natural and artistic pre-disposition or talent the student may possess will be drawn out and developed.

To allude very briefly to methods ; the applicant for admission presents a drawing from the cast, either of a part or the whole figure, and if satisfactorily passed upon by the Committee on Instruction, the student is admitted to the night or day class for drawing from the antique. When the student has shown here sufficient understanding and ability a second drawing made from an entire figure is submitted to the Committee, and with their approval and the recommendation of the Instructors, admission is gained to the life class sought to be entered.

A distinct feature of the School is the desire and expectation that every student shall enter the class for modelling the human figure in clay, at the same time with the class in drawing or painting, being able in this way to gain a definite knowledge of anatomical structure, form and movement. In artistic anatomy a course of thirty-five lectures is given to the whole school ; and the dissecting room, directed by the professor and under charge of a demonstrator, is open to more advanced students, who seem likely to be benefited by practical work in this department.

The sketch class, the portrait class and the class in composition are open to all students. Much interest has been shown in the composition class, and good results have followed, the stimulus here given being on the literary and poetic side of art. The subject for sketch is announced early in each month and drawings are submitted anonymously to the whole class, with a short criticism by the Instructor.

In conducting the schools the Direction aims that study shall be on the broadest, most liberal and highest plane, still believing, in the face of denial, that there is a

conscience in art, and that earnest sincerity and genuine purpose are the proper conditions, as well as the justification for its pursuit. For after all, as has been well said, "it is by the aid of sincerity and conscience that the artist is enabled to see more clearly than other men the eternal limits of his own art—to see with Sophocles that nothing, not even art itself, is of any worth to man, invested as he is by the whole army of evil, unless it is in the deepest and highest sense good."

Speaking next of the exhibitions, it has been the custom to hold these annually in the Spring of each year. In several instances, however, the time has been changed to the Fall, in order to coöperate with the dates of exhibitions by institutions in other parts of the country, all of which are now eager competitors for the out-turn from American easels.

The first exhibition by the newly organized Academy was made in the rotunda of the building, completed in 1806, but the first regular exhibition took place in 1811, Judge Hopkinson delivering the opening oration. Even in that early day there seems to have been a fair display of native work, and we notice contributions by Rembrandt Peale, Bass Otis, Wright and Krimmel. The contribution of the last named is still on the walls of the Academy, and is full of interest and history.

In 1830, Frances Trollope, in her notes, writes of the nineteenth annual exhibition that four hundred and thirty-one objects were exhibited, including thirty engravings, and a much larger number of water color drawings. She also adds that over one of the rooms was inscribed "Antique Sculpture Gallery," but that a screen placed immediately within the door effectually prevented any objects being seen from without; and we may remark in

this connection that twenty-four years earlier, in 1806, "in consideration of the unblushing casts" from the marbles of the Louvre, "Mondays were set aside for ladies exclusively."

Of necessity there have been breaks in the chain occasioned by the fire in 1845, the years between 1870-1876, when the Academy was without a home, and other causes; but in the main there has been regularity, and the Exhibition to open in a few days will be the 60th of the series. As for several years past, it is in charge of a Committee of Artists, nominated by the exhibitors of the previous year, and in connection with the regular Exhibition Committee of the Directors.

Of the permanent collection of the Academy it is not always the fashion to speak with the respect which it deserves. Whether this be owing to ignorance, or to the fact that the frames of some of the pictures sadly need renewing, or to that wilful lack of appreciation, regarding its own things, which distinguishes Philadelphia among American cities, it is difficult to say. A defense of each and every canvass certainly could not be made and will not be attempted; but it must be borne in mind that the collection has grown by gift and purchase, beginning in the earliest days of American art, and continuing through a period in which the country was growing in this direction as in all others. Much that is otherwise uninteresting is of exceeding importance as illustrating the progress of art in the first century of the Republic. Much else was of especial value when presented or obtained. Speaking however without apology, and in high terms of praise, attention may briefly be called to:—

The "Lansdowne" and "Athenæum" portraits
of General Washington, GILBERT STUART.

The Dead Man Restored to Life,

WASHINGTON ALLSTON.

Cooke as Richard III,

THOMAS SULLY.

Centre Square,

J. L. KRIMMEL.

Pat Lyon at the Forge,

JOHN NEAGLE.

The Violinist,

VANDERHELST.

Nymphs,

C. POELENBURG.

The Duke of Arno and Parisina,

A. GASTALDI.

Borgia and Machiavelli,

F. FARUFINI.

On the honor roll of public spirit and generosity,
presented or bequeathed to the Academy at different
dates, portraits by Stuart, of

Mrs. Blodgett,

Mrs. Elizabeth Willing Jackson,

Miss Bordley,

Mrs. Richard Peters,

Mr. John Nixon.

Presented by Joseph Allen Smith,

Mercury Deceiving Argus,

SALVATOR ROSA.

Presented by Miss Leslie and Mrs. Carey,

The Murder of Rutland by Lord Clifford,

C. R. LESLIE.

Presented by Mrs. John W. Field,

Virgin,

FRANCIA.

Virgin and Child,

GOZZOLI.

In the Carey Collection,

Cottage Door,

W. COLLINS, R. A.

Mercy's Dream,

DANIEL HUNTINGTON.

Presented by Mrs. Joseph Harrison,

Christ Rejected,	BENJAMIN WEST.
Charles Willson Peale,	PEALE.
Ariadne in Naxos,	JOHN VANDERLYN.
Orestes Pursued by the Furies,	BOUGUEREAU.

Presented by Atherton Blight,

Off the French Coast, (moonlight)	W. P. W. DANA.
-----------------------------------	----------------

Presented by Paris Haldeman,

Madame Modjeska,	CAROLUS DURAN.
------------------	----------------

Presented by William B. Bement,

Yosemite Valley,	THOMAS HILL.
------------------	--------------

In the Temple Collection,

The Breton Story Teller,	ROBERT WYLIE.
On the Borders of the Marsh,	W. H. PICKNELL.
Roumanian Lady,	F. A. BRIDGMAN.

And to continue the list in the Gallery of Sculpture
may be mentioned :—

The “Ceres,”	FROM MEGARA.
--------------	--------------

Already referred to.

Hero and Leander,	CARL STEINHAUSER.
Proserpine, (bust,) /	HIRAM POWERS.
Spring,	E. D. PALMER.
Jesusalem,	W. W. STORY.

and the model of Lough's Centaurs and Lapithæ,
in the rotunda, fitly described as one of the most
imposing decorations of plastic art. All of these are
worthy of place in any gallery, and our Academy is
fortunate in their possession. Before leaving this sub-
ject allusion should be made to the collection of

engravings in the Library, about 60,000 in number, bequeathed to the Academy by John S. Phillips, which can be seen by application to the librarian; and to the complete and admirable series of the old masters, reproduced by the Arundel Society of London, and presented by one of the present Board of Directors.

Of the future of the Academy there is much to be said, more indeed than this occasion will allow. In the high cause of art there are many things needed. At the present moment one of the most urgent is greater harmony and co-operation in the practical working of the different art institutions of the city. Unfortunately there is no statute legislative or moral against that "parallelism," which in railway building has been checked, but which, whether in the matter of art education, or other direction, constantly threatens the welfare of a particular branch of endeavor, by the starting of new and weakling ventures, rather than in the building up and maintaining of those which already exist. There are to-day in Philadelphia four life schools. Why should there be more than one—the Academy? At great cost it is arranged to offer every facility for thorough, systematic and complete work in this direction. The school rooms and equipment are unequalled by the Artists' League for the Academy of Design in New York, and are not excelled by the great schools of Paris, up to the present time. The field of art education is large enough to be sub-divided to the advantage and welfare of all, but the Academy must be the highest school, the university of art teaching, or its school department has no reason for existence.

In the matter of exhibitions of current contemporary work in sculpture and painting, something of the

same nature may be said. Nothing but praise should be accorded to the exhibition which has just closed in these beautiful rooms of the Art Club, and to the energy and patient labor which such an exhibition always represents, but it may be fairly questioned whether all formal and regular displays, excepting of course such as may be made for members of the Club, as is now usual with the Century Club of New York, should not take place in the galleries of the Academy; and whether all should not there unite to make such exhibitions thoroughly representative, as well as wholly successful.

For the Academy a larger endowment is most desirable, and must be had, if bold, aggressive and permanent work is to be done, the bequest of the late Mr. Temple having proved a loss to the treasury, though a gain to the public, by reason of the free days which were its condition. Additions to the galleries for the permanent collection, and importantly the gift or bequest of portraits, representing the work of Trumbull, Copley, Stuart and others, necessary to complete the historical series of the institution, would be most valuable and acceptable. It is also hoped that it may be possible to enrich the collection of casts from the antique by the addition of reproductions from Grecian statues recently discovered. The influence of the Elgin marbles in England can scarcely be overestimated, and we are told by Madame Rachel that to the sculptures of the Louvre, first seen in her childhood, she was indebted for the artistic inspiration of her life.

But what the Academy now needs more than all else,—and it is worthy an eloquent and convincing plea,—is the intelligent interest and sympathetic co-operation of every citizen.

If any one be inclined to give credence to the superstition that the Academy's directors are sufficient unto themselves, and arrogate to themselves control and responsibility for all art in Philadelphia, a protest and denial must here be entered. The Academy eighty-five years ago, was founded, fostered and built up by the citizens for the public good. It was the pride and enthusiastic boast of the entire community. The heart of every man who travelled in foreign lands and among the treasures of the old world, kept turning homeward with the thought of what could be secured for that institution. Why should it not be so to-day? It is not the possession of a clique, nor of a body of directors happening to be in the management. They are but *trustees* of interests which are of great and real importance. They want the enthusiastic sympathy and the criticism, if manly and sincere, of every man and woman who has at heart the artistic welfare of the commonwealth; and it may be added that, after the manner of Brutus, they hold their offices subject to the election of more competent, more public-spirited, more devoted art lovers than themselves.

With regard to the permanent collection, the future opens out before us a broad avenue of opportunity. It is no longer true, as William B. Reed once said, that Philadelphia has but one statue—that of Henry Clay on the front of an iron founder's shop. Of the past we speak only with grateful appreciation, but when will our Catharine Wolfs, our Marquands and Seneys become emulous to make ours a great and noted museum—a museum worthy of our own admiration and devotion, as well as that of pilgrims from distant cities of the country? When shall our walls be filled

with the best that has been, and is being said and done in the great Republic of art? In its literature there are perhaps few more eloquent and impressive descriptions than that given by Mrs. Jameson, of the unselfish and life-long sacrifice by which the City of Cologne became possessed of its famous Medusa. Names will be forgotten and fortunes will melt away, but while that splendid marble lasts the fame of the giver will remain.

Recently there has been started by one of our large hearted citizens a plan to secure Léon Bonnat's splendid portrait of Cardinal Lavigérie, Bishop of Algiers, and famous for his efforts to wipe out the African slave trade. This seems likely to fail on account of the present ownership of the picture, but other works equally important may be had which would give dignity and reputation to the Academy and to the city. Is not this the opportunity of the Art Club? Surely here is a vocation for any art institution, and what great things might not be accomplished by the generous and united efforts of its members?

The atmosphere of life grows rarer, one feels the heart expand, a serene light spreads from the illuminated page of the history of the Renaissance, as we read that in the work shop of Donatello the large sums received by him were deposited in a box from which his friends and fellow-workmen were invited and expected to help themselves, no questions being asked or receipts given. What could not an age accomplish when the love of art was so intense, and devotion to self so utterly forgotten.

What better service can be rendered to our time than the offering to it of loftier ideals and more potent inspirations? As is the legend of our Philadelphia

Library, descended to us from the hands of Franklin, Logan and Rush, "to pour forth riches for the common good is to be godlike!" And for ourselves, should we not be the chief gainers, in securing great works of art—works which, as Ruskin says, contain the greatest number of the greatest ideas. Here then are both the power and the opportunity. Shall we not with sincerity and earnestness undertake to do something which is worthy of the doing?

The wheels of the world will continue to turn, and it will be a beautiful or a commonplace world, as we, and not the Fates, make it. Fortune may not always favor us, Care will still mount with us as we ride; disappointment, disaster, death are certain, but says Goethe, "There is no better deliverance from the world than through art." Avocations the most absorbing, pursuits the most irresistible, undertakings, the most engaging, fail, lose interest and come to an end; but there remains the unconquerable mind; and as again and again we listen to the voices from the world of the ideal,

"A noble wonder in our souls awakes,
The deathless beautiful draws strangely nigh,
And we look up, and marvel how so long
We were content to toil for sordid joys that die."